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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 January 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human Rights abuses in Yemen

Saudi Arabia has been a member of the Human Rights Council since 2013. The Council members are required to be committed to protection and promotion of human rights, however Saudi Arabia's recent humanitarian records shows that this government has involved in gross violation of human and humanitarian rights in Yemen.

Yemenis are killed and Injured by Saudi-led coalition

Since the formation of the Saudi-led coalition in 2015, countless cases of human rights and humanitarian law violations have been reported in Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition bombed hospitals, schools, religious sites, and other civilian infrastructure and carried out indiscriminate attacks, killing and injuring civilians.¹ Since the escalation of the attacks after formation of the Saudi-led coalition, more than 10000 civilians have been killed and 40,000 injured.² Meanwhile, more than 900,000 Yemenis have been affected by an outbreak of cholera.³

Yemen's city infrastructure is destroyed

The coalition carried out an average of 474 air raids per month with a total number of 15,489 air raids recorded from 26 March 2015 to 15 December 2017. Nearly one third of all air raids (31%) targeted non-military sites, this included: 386 air raids targeted farms, 183 air raids targeted market places, 102 air raids targeted water and electricity sites, 62 air raids targeted food storage sites and 68 air raids targeted medical facilities.⁴ In addition to killing and injuring people, the conflict has led to displacement of millions of Yemenis and restricted their access to basic services.

Blockade limited access to basic needs

The already horrible situation for the Yemenis is deteriorated by the Coalition's blockade of Yemen. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that more than 3.27 million people had been forcibly displaced in the conflict by October and nearly 21.2 million people, 80% of the population, relied on humanitarian assistance.⁵ The humanitarian crisis is the result of the Yemen besiege by the Saudi-led coalition which has limited the access of the already poor population to basic need services including food, drinking water, fuel, medicine and medical care, making millions of people suffer from man-made humanitarian crisis.

Civilians are targeted by cluster bombs

Coalition forces used imprecise munitions in some attacks, including large bombs made in the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and also continued to use cluster munitions made in the United States and the United Kingdom in their attacks to civilian sites. Such munitions are widely prohibited internationally because of their inherently indiscriminate nature.⁶

The United States and the United Kingdom sell weapons to Saudi Arabia to kill Yemenis

The existing data on military exports to the Middle East shows serious attempts for supporting the Coalition countries in their attacks to human targets in Yemen by specific countries. In the last three years, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, etc. sold huge amount of various types of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/>

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-civil-war-civilian-death-toll-10000-killed-40000-injured-conflict-un-reveals-a7530836.html>

³ <http://mailchi.mp/0050f0d53f33/1000-days-of-saudi-led-air-war-in-yemen-218143?e=c5a23e9692>

⁴ <http://mailchi.mp/0050f0d53f33/1000-days-of-saudi-led-air-war-in-yemen-218143?e=c5a23e9692>

⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/>

⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/>

the United Arab Emirates such as drones, missiles and bombs which were used in their attacks to Yemen. Just in 2015, Saudi Arabia's import of military equipment from these countries reached to \$25 billion (€18 billion).⁷

This is while all weapon exporting countries that were mentioned above, are members of the Arms Trade Treaty and also a signatory to it. The aim of this Treaty is to reduce human sufferings and contributing to international and regional peace, security and stability.⁸ But we see that weapons are used by Saudi Arabia and its allies for extensive human rights violations and war crimes in Yemen, resulting in the displacement of 2.5 million people in just less than one year.

Furthermore, the United States has been a party to the conflict since the first months of fighting, providing targeting intelligence and in-air refueling. The United States said it had deployed some troops in Yemen to aid the United Arab Emirates and its own campaign.⁹ And despite pressure from numerous human rights organizations, the United States has continued to support Saudi Arabia in its blockade too.¹⁰

International reactions against humanitarian situation in Yemen

The humanitarian calamity happening in Yemen made the international community to react against Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates attacks. Part of the international reaction to the situation can be seen in UN resolutions. In the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 29 September 2017 on human rights, technical assistance and capacity-building in Yemen, the Council condemns the ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen. Therefore, a group of eminent international and regional experts was mandated by council to monitor and report on the situation of human rights, and to carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights. It is hoped that the independent Commission (the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen) will take practical steps to hold the criminals responsible for the crimes, putting an end to the impunity of the perpetrators and guarantee the Yemen victims access to justice, remedy and redress.

Recommendations

Emphasizing the statistics and facts mentioned above, ODVV calls on:

- 1- the Saudi Arabia to uphold its international obligations, specially its obligations as a Council member, to promotion of human rights;
- 2- the Saudi Arabia to carry out an accurate investigation of war crimes committed by its forces, since the country's international obligations requires it to investigate allegations of war crimes and hold those responsible to account;
- 3- the United Nations to facilitate the urgent access of Yemeni people and their families to suitable compensations;
- 4- the United States, United Kingdom, and countries to stop selling weapons to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates to avoid their cooperation in the ongoing war crimes in Yemen;
- 5- the Human Rights Council to consider suspending the membership of the member states who are convicted of gross violation of human rights by international human rights bodies;
- 6- the GEE (Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen) to reflect all the facts about the crimes committed in Yemen in its September 2018.

⁷ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-accused-of-killing-up-to-50-civilians-in-market-bombing-in-yemen-ahead-of-arms-trade-a6901126.html>

⁸ <https://unoda-web-s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/English.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/yemen>

¹⁰ <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/12/saudi-led-coalitions-actions-in-yemen-come-under-increasing-us-scrutiny/>